

XXI. Queries sent to a Friend in Constantinople; by Dr. Maty, F. R. S.; and answered by his Excellency James Porter, Esq; his Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, and F. R. S.

The Queries proposed were the Seven following:

Read April 10, 1. 1755. Whether we may know with any certainty, how many people are generally carried off by the plague at Constantinople?

2. Whether the number of inhabitants in that capital may be ascertained?

3. Whether what has been advanced by some travellers, and from them assumed by writers on politics, be true, that there are more women than men born in the east?

4. Whether plurality of wives is in fact, as it was confidently affirmed to be, *in the order of nature*, favourable to the increase of mankind?

5. What is the actual state of inoculation in the east?

6. What is become of the printing-house at Constantinople? and are there any original maps of the Turkish dominions, drawn from actual surveys?

7. What sort of learning is cultivated among the Greeks, and among the Turks?

To

To these Queries his Excellency James Porter, Esq; his Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, and Fellow of this Society, was pleased to make the following Answer:

1. The only plague, which I observed at Constantinople, in the course of seven years, was that of the year 1751: there are almost annually dispersed accidents, some perhaps real, some suggested by trick and design, to serve sinister purposes.

I attempted that year to throw some observations on paper; but all that I could make out of them was so unsatisfactory, trite, and imperfect, that I thought them, on a review, scarce worth notice.

I am convinced, that whatever is told us of that distemper is scarce to be depended on; rather conjecture than observation, rather the play of imagination than fact. However, I had made it a principal study to attain to some data, whereby I could draw a probable conclusion concerning the number of the dead, that year, which might also have led me to have ascertained that of the inhabitants at Constantinople.

2. The Turks have no register, no bills of mortality: they are prohibited, by their law, to enumerate the people. I applied to the Reis Effendi, and other ministers of the Porte, to know what probable calculation they could make concerning the number of dead; but they all concurred in one general answer, that they had no other but what was founded on the decrease of the consumption of the quantity of corn, or bread; and in general talked of about 150000. I therefore betook myself, with all my

care and industry, to try what probable conclusions I could draw from that imperfect datum. Corn is delivered out by an officer of consideration, and an exact register kept.

Before the commencement of the plague, that was in March and April 1751, the consumption of corn was 19000 measures, called Khilo's. On its continuance and decrease it diminished to 17000, and on its total cessation, it was found not to amount to above 14000. A khilo weighs twenty-two okes. It is grounded to eighteen okes of flower. The bakers have generally the secret to make out of this last quantity twenty-seven okes of bread. They add to an oke of flower one of water, besides some salt; and as their bread is almost dough, few of the watry particles are exhaled; and it is thought of the best, if it is not doubled in quantity, when taken out of the oven.

The common people, and even most of the middling and easy, live principally on bread; the former with onion, garlick, fruits, or pulse, according to the seasons; the latter with very small portions of flesh, or fish. The more laborious professions, as labouring men, stone-cutters, carpenters, &c. eat from two to two and a half okes a day; the other, according to the common run of families, composed of men, women, and children, half an oke each; so that the lowest calculation, on a medium, may be about an oke and a quarter daily, eaten by each person at Constantinople.

But should it be thought too much, an oke, which is two pounds three-quarters English, we may suppose

pose nearer truth : the following conclusions then will result :

That therefore on the highest number of 19000 x 27, we have 513000, the quantity of okes of bread consumed, and consequently the number of souls at Constantinople. That on the decrease of the plague to 17000, 54000 persons were either dead or missing. That when the quantity was reduced to 14000 on the cessation, those either fled or dead amounted to 135000.

It is said by some, that Constantinople contains near three millions of inhabitants ; but on whatever supposition we take the consumption of the quantity of bread, that quantity will be found erroneous.

On a gross calculation made by some of the principal men, and particularly the Chiorbachee's, or colonels of Janizaries, who had their stations at the most noted and only places where the funerals pass, they reckoned for six weeks, whilst the plague was at its height, and in its crisis, from 900 to 1000 *per diem* ; and that the whole amount of the dead in that time might be about 40000 : and from the time it was in its increase and decline, they added 15 to 20000 more. If therefore we admit 60000 in the whole, it will be as that sum to 513000, or as 1 to $8\frac{1}{16}$.

There is a remarkable coincidence between this proportion, and the number of dead which was carried out of the Adrianople-gate, during twelve days, the same season of the year 1752 ; and of the like number of days in 1751.

1752 Health.	1751 Plague.
June 14 — 11	June 12 — 24
15 — 3	13 — 29
16 — 5	14 — 32
17 — 5	15 — 35
18 — 4	16 — 24
19 — 8	20 — 50
20 — 3	25 — 34
22 — 3	22 — 37
23 — 5	23 — 52
24 — 4	July 14 — 56
25 — 5	15 — 57
26 — 3	16 — 59
—	—
59	489
—	—

So that the number of dead, at least through that gate, in time of common health, was to those in that of sickness, as 59 to 489, or as 1 to $8\frac{1}{3}$, nearly.

The Adrianople-gate is reckoned the greatest passage for the dead, on account of its vicinity to the most extensive burial-places.

A great deduction must be made for the vast decrease of the consumption of wheat towards the cessation of the plague, from the considerable numbers, who fled into Asia, the islands of the Archipelago, and Romelia.

A cogent argument with me to demonstrate, that Constantinople is not peopled in proportion to its extent, is the immense care which the late Sultan Mahmud took, not to admit new inhabitants, or strangers;

strangers; none could remain a night in the city without commands from the Porte; and those were with great difficulty obtained.

It is extreme difficult, if not impossible, to come at any other *computus* of the number of inhabitants, much more so of houses, at Constantinople. The city is divided somewhat in the manner it was under the Græcian empire, that is, into different quarters, called Mahales, and each under the special direction of an Imaum. As far as it extends to their immediate advantage, they are informed of the number of families in their district; but whoever would dare to collect from them, might not only risk the censure of the government, but his head. Besides, if the inquiry is general concerning houses, it is impossible to fix a determined idea; they confound palace, seraglio, shop, room, and call them indiscriminately houses. The Jews say, that they have 10000 houses at Constantinople: but in what we call a house, there are perhaps ten families, and the distinct number of the latter they dare not mention. I endeavoured with persuasion, and all my weight, to induce the Greek and Armenian patriarchs, to obtain for me a register of the births and burials of their respective communities; but at length they acknowledged it impossible. Their parishes are farmed to curates, by the diocesan bishops; the income arises from births and burials; so that to conceal the former, they must likewise the latter; and they never exhibit a faithful register.

3. That there are more women than men born in the east, seems a figment of travellers, rather than founded in truth; it is scarce to be known, where polygamy

Polygamy is lawful. The apparent conclusion may seem natural, because many of the Harems of the opulent, especially in the great cities, are numerous: but these are not composed of the natives of those cities, but are brought from countries where the Christian rites are observed, in time of peace, from Georgia; and of war, from Hungary and Russia, &c. so that if more women are found in such families than men, they must be looked upon as an extraneous production annually, or daily imported.

I think I can aver, on good foundation, that we have not yet extant, an exact genuine account of the customs, manners, and practices, of these people, nor really of these countries. Those which I have read are extreme faulty, not to say worse, in many particulars, which have fallen under my own knowledge. What am I then to conclude, as to those that have not? And how can a Tournefort, and many others I could name, in running over vast tracks of countries in two years, or less, sometimes by night, sometimes by day, with hasty caravans, give us a true history? Even Ricaut's, he, who dwelt some years in these countries, is founded on very imperfect memoirs: what he says of the interior of the seraglio is impossible to be known; and I find by some original letters of his, from Hamburg, to a nephew he had, as secretary to this embassy, that he begged for some notes of one Mr. Coke, formerly in that office, in order to continue his history. Now, it is evident, that all such notes must have been only the hearsay of the Christians of Pera, who neither have, nor ever, had, knowledge or observation sufficient to be depended on; nor dare they venture to enter

enter into intimate particulars with such Mahometans as could truly inform them.

Credulity and vulgar errors abound, as a consequence of their faith ; for they are all Greeks or Romanists. Those are taken traditionally. To instance in one collected from them, and universally received by travellers ; they tell us, that the Turks make publick prayers and processions in time of plague, when 1000 corps a day are carried out of the Adrianople-gate. This tradition was current in the year 1751. I knew it must be false from the very Koran. However, I had the question put to many, particularly to the Reis Effendi, great chancellor of the empire, who let me know they never numbered them, nor inquired minutely how many died ; that in time of great calamity or fickness, they only ordered a passage of the Koran to be read in their Mosches. Thus, by a single inquiry, I detected a fable which has passed current, since Mahomet the Second's time. This is one example of many.

4. I can affirm, with truth, what may seem a paradox, that in general, Mahometans, notwithstanding their law, procreate less than Christians. The rich, who are the only persons that can maintain concubines, have seldom four or five children. Few, I have heard of, or known, exceed two or three ; many of the former, and most of the middling and poorer sort, have generally but one wife. The latter indeed exchange them with facility ; but yet we do not perceive they have a numerous progeny. I take this to arise from a cause different from that which is commonly assigned, not from their being enervated by variety, but rather from their law. The frequent ablutions

ablutions, required by the doctrine of purity and impurity, perhaps may check the libidinous passion ; or when it is at its height, they find themselves prohibited enjoyment. To enforce this observation might lead me into some singular reflections.

5. Inoculation is practised at present among the Greeks, and, notwithstanding religious scruples, among the Romanists : with the few, whom I have known, it generally succeeded ; but the numbers will not admit of comparison. There are not perhaps twenty in a year inoculated. The Timoni family pretend, that a daughter had been inoculated at six months old, but afterwards acquired the small-pox in the natural way, and died at twenty-three years. The evidence is doubtful. Timoni's account is incorrect ; his facts are not to be depended on. Pylarini's is more exact. It was neither Circassians, Georgians, nor Asiatics, who introduced the practice. The first woman was of the Morea ; her successor was a Bosniac ; they brought it from Thessaly, or the Peloponnesus, now Morea. They properly scarified the patient, commonly on many parts, sometimes on the forehead, under the hair, sometimes on the cheeks, and on the radius of the arm. A father told me, that the old woman not being able, through age, to make the incision on his daughter, with the razor, he performed that operation. The needle has also been used. The Turks never inoculate : they trust to their *fatum*. Whence the method had its origin seems here unknown. A Capuchin friar, whom I often see, was on a mission in Georgia for above sixteen years ; he has returned about two years ; he is a grave sober man, who gives an historical account of the virtues and vices, good and

and evil, of that country, with plainness and candour. The usual introduction and security of these misionaries is the pretence to the practice of physic, that in destroying bodies they may save souls : so that this honest man, who is extremely ignorant, was in high reputation both as physician and confessor. It was therefore impossible, as he himself observes, that either the public or private practice of inoculation could be concealed from him ; but he has most solemnly declared to me repeatedly, that he never heard one word about it at Akalsike, Imrette, or Tifflis ; he is persuaded, that it has never been known among them. He has often and frequently attended the small-pox, which is almost certain death there ; and generally, if not always, of the confluent kind.

6. Printing was introduced by an Hungarian renegado, who called himself Ibrahim Effendi : it had no long continuance. The copies are not many, and are now very dear and scarce ; few even to be bought.

The maps did not exceed three or four ; one of Persia, one of the Bosphorus, and one of the Euxinus, or Black-sea ; they are not to be found but in private hands. All our maps of these countries are extremely imperfect and incorrect.

The jealousy and superstition of the people, tho' the government should permit Christians to raise any printing-house, would be an irresistible impediment ; and they are too ignorant themselves to be ever capable of doing it. The adoptive son of this Ibrahim Effendi, who bears the same name, is secretary under the interpreter of the porte ; he has all the

materials for printing, but never could find, since his father's death, and during Sultan Mahmud's reign, money to carry it on. The question is now, whether Sultan Osman is not too strict a mussulman to continue the permission.

7. The progress of arts and sciences, and literature, seems travelling on, *gradatim*, to the westward, from Ægypt to Greece, from Greece to Rome, thence to the west of Europe, and I suppose at last to America. We find few traces in the east: the Greeks, who should be the depositaries of them, are the same Greeks they ever were, *Homines contentionis cupidiores quam veritatis*. They have retained all the vices, imperfections, ill habitudes, of their ancestors; but have lost all their public spirit, and public virtues. The clergy, who should support the whole machine of learning, are themselves the source of ignorance; all their talents and acquisitions consist in bribing amongst the Turks, and soliciting to destroy one patriarch in order to make another; to raise from a curacy to a bishoprick, and to exchange from an indifferent one to a better. They endeavour to cultivate literal Greek, and some study it, but advance no further. There are neither grammarians, critics, historians, nor philosophers, among them; nor have they proper preceptors or masters to instruct. They have formed a sort of an academy at Mount Athos, for their youth, which will scarce survive the person who has undertaken it: he has himself but the mere elements of science. However, his desire of knowing may improve him; and he may perhaps lay the foundations in some youth with success.

The

The Turks have many books amongst them, tho exceedingly dear; folios I have seen cost 100 to 2 and 300 dollars each; *i.e.* from 15*l.* to 45*l.* The few printed folios, some of which I pick'd up some years ago, cost 5*l.* to 6*l.* sterling. Their scribes spend many years about a few copies. Their learning consists principally in abstruse metaphysics: some few touch the surface of science. I have looked out with great industry for old Arabian manuscripts in the mathematical way: what they brought me were translations of some propositions of Euclid, Theodosius, Archimedes, and Apollonius. They have some parts of Aristotle; but their favourite philosophy is the atomical or Epicurean, which with them is called the Democritical, from Democritus. Many of their speculative men have adopted that system, and conform to it in their secret practice. The institutes and practice of physic are taken from Galen. Eben Zyna, or Avicena, is a principal guide: Matthiolus is known. But with all this, as the sole drift and end of their study is gain, there does not seem the least emulation towards true knowlege: so that the state of letters may be said to remain deplorable, without the least glimmering, or remote prospect of a recovery.

Constantinople,
Feb. 1, 1755.

J. P.

Since the reception of this memoir, Dr. Maty has received another letter from the same gentleman, in which he finds some new facts tending to clear up the accounts relating to the practice of inoculation among the Georgians. These he hopes will not be unacceptable, as they come from a person equally able, by his universal knowledge and distinguished station, to procure the best informations, and willing, for the good of mankind, to communicate them in the most obliging and candid manner.

Constantinople, May 17, 1755.

I AM now to correct the report of the Capuchin concerning inoculation in Georgia. One of their physicians, a most ignorant fellow, who lives by his profession here, avers that, among those who follow the true Georgian rites, not Romanists, the practice is common. It has its rise from mere superstition. He tells us, " That the tradition and religious belief of that people is, that an Angel presides over that distemper, that therefore, to shew their confidence in him, and to invite him to be propitious, they take a pox from the sick person, and, by a scarification, they insert it in one in health, generally between the fore-finger and thumb. It never misses its effect, and the patient always recovers. To attract the Angel's good-will more effectually, they hang the patient's bed with red cloth or stuff, as a colour most agreeable to him. He has been assistant to this practice, and declares it to be common." Perhaps the only good effect ever known produced by that monster superstition ! The Capuchin acknowledges, that it might be amongst the

the Georgians the Doctor mentions, and not have fell under his knowlege. To vindicate his ignorance, he distinguishes the parts of Georgia, or its divisions. He has never been at Cackett, and staid but three weeks at once in Tiflis.

J. P.

XXII. Extracts of Two Letters to Thomas Hollis, Esq; concerning the late Discoveries at Herculaneum.

Read April 10,
1755. **A**LL the antiquities, which were in
the royal palace at Naples, that is,
those which did belong to the Parma collection, have
been carried to the King's new palace of Capo di
monte; and it is reported, that Padre Pancrazi will
have the care of them.

Paderni has the custody of all the bronzes, and
things in gold and silver, which have been found in
the different places where they have dug, by order
of the King; and they are handsomely arranged in
several rooms at Portici. The great gallery there is
almost finished. In it are to be deposited the statues
in bronze and marble, the pictures, the inscriptions,
and the columns of verd'antique and oriental ala-
baster found throughout the kingdom.

Near the royal palace at Portici, has been dis-
covered a large garden, with a palace belonging to it.
In one room of this palace was found a mosaic pave-
ment (which I have seen) made up of different col-
oured stones. It represents a city surrounded with
walls,